

The new slavery / by John Davis, M.C.

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THE NEW SLAVERY.

BY JOHN DAVIS, M. C.

I have been asked to answer the question, "*Have we abolished slavery?*" To answer that question intelligently we should first form a correct idea of the nature of slavery. *Slavery is a means by which the master enjoys the earnings of the man.* This single sentence covers the case entirely. If, by whips, bloodhounds and shotguns, supported by a code of laws, a man or a class of men enjoy the earnings of the men who labor, such a system is slavery. If, however, the same results are reached in any other way in spite of the victims, is not that system slavery also?

To illustrate the common narrow view as to the nature and processes of slavery, even among the more intelligent circles of society, and the journals and magazines which profess to be leaders and moulders of public sentiment, I quote from an old magazine the following statement:—

The close of this century ought to witness the end of slavery on this planet. For fifty years there have been no slaves permitted under the flag of England. The late Czar Alexander set free the serfs in his dominion, while the war of the rebellion liberated 4,000,000 black slaves in the United States. The empire of Brazil decreed in 1871 that every child born thereafter should be free. Cuba is getting rid of slavery very rapidly, and the interest taken by the commercial nations in the Congo Valley, Africa, will soon bring about a stoppage to the practice of man-hunting, and thus slavery will die for want of new slaves.— *Demorest's Monthly*, June, 1884.

The American people inherited the discussion of the subject of slavery from their fathers in Europe; and for several generations it periodically crowded itself to the front as the leading subject in politics. Yet it is safe to say that we know little of its nature and processes except the single variety known as chattel slavery, and that only in connection with the colored race. To aid, therefore, in a more intelligent appreciation of the subject, I propose to discuss some of the leading varieties of human slavery.

Chattel slavery is a system in which the master owns the slave, possessing the power to buy and sell him at will; to work him hard and feed him little; to punish and outrage his person; even to kill him, if so disposed, being restrained only by the money invested in such human property. This is chattel slavery as it formerly existed in the British Empire and in America. It had 746 its origin in physical

force—in war and piracy. Its foreign supply was maintained by the same means. Ships were fitted out by traders who visited weak, unoffending and uncivilized peoples for the purchase or capture of men, women and children to be sold in the markets of slave countries. Children were bought from parents and subjects from chiefs, for a mere trinket or trifle, and then, when cupidity dictated, both chiefs and parents were captured to complete the cargo.

The slave trade had its risks and dangers, and not unfrequently battles were fought to subdue such as could not be cajoled and swindled. When on shipboard the captives were manacled and confined lest they might mutiny and overpower the crew, or lest individuals in their anguish might leap into the sea. The slaves had to be attended and fed, lest death and damage might prove a moneyed loss to the owners before the market was reached and the cargo disposed of. When sold, the owner put the slaves to work on plantations of cotton, rice and tobacco; and then it was that the master began to “enjoy the earnings of the man.” This was chattel slavery and the slave trade. They were inhuman and savage in the extreme. The slave trade, ultimately, was branded by civilized nations as piracy, and punished as an outrage upon humanity. The whole system was full of risks—financial and personal—to the masters; while for the slaves there were none but the lowest forms of physical mercy.

I now invite attention to another form of slavery—far safer, far better and more comprehensive for the masters, but less merciful to the slaves. It is *bond slavery*, or “bondage,” and may be illustrated by actual facts now transpiring in many parts of the world. It is a refined system—popular with civilized nations; as much superior to chattel slavery in its financial results as the railroad is to the wheelbarrow in matters of transportation. It annually yields millions and billions to the masters, with the minimum of financial or personal risk, while it enslaves whole nations, reaping the profits of states and empires as fast as the crops can grow, or the profits of labor can be moulded into valuable form.

Bond slavery has its origin and power for evil in financial injustice and usury. Let me illustrate: Instead of using a private ship, supplied with the implements of war and manacles for human limbs, fitted up in secret, and escaping by stealth from secluded harbors, we usually find a British steamer, proudly moored in the docks of Liverpool. Bearing the agents of English and French capitalists, it steams out into the ocean gaily in broad daylight, bound for a pleasure and business trip, let us say, to the land of the Pharaohs. These agents are gentlemen of leisure and respectability. They will have welcome access into the 747 highest court circles of Alexandria and Cairo. They are on a mission of civilization and business from a Christian and enlightened people, who have spent millions of money and thousands of lives in abolishing the African slave trade and branding it as piracy. They are from a

Christian island, whose soil “cannot be pressed by the foot of a slave!” and whose very air “melts the shackles from the limbs of slavery!”

Those high-born, Christian men are on a pleasant visit to half-barbarous Egypt. They study the thoughts and aspirations of its poor, weak but ambitious prince. He aspires to shine as the owner of an imperial palace; he would muster a splendid army, with gay equipments and trappings. The inmates of his harem and the chargers in his stables are dust and ashes compared with what this weak, proud man would possess if he could. He dreams of canals for irrigation and commerce; of railroads and bridges like those of Europe; light-houses in his harbors; and a more honorable title to be bought of the Sultan of Turkey; of a thousand things, useful and ornamental, none of which can be procured without millions of money. His weak points are studied and his ambitions stimulated by the wily agents of the European capitalists. Without money, however, his dreams and aspirations must end in mortification and misery.

Here, now, is the harvest of the financiers. The proposition is made to furnish the viceroy *all the money he wants in exchange for the bonds of Egypt!* A strong box is unlocked containing blank bonds—printed in London in three languages—English, French and Egyptian. “Fill out, legally execute, sign and deliver these papers,” say the agents, “and we will pay you in hard coin, or its equivalent in exchange on London and Paris, fifty cents on the dollar of the face value of the bonds to the amount of hundreds of millions.” It is a Golconda! It is an Eldorado! It is a greater “find” to the poor half barbarian than were the mines of South America and Mexico to the kings of Europe. He snaps the bait, and in the end \$400,000,000 of bonds are resting on the labor of Egypt. The interest and expenses of collection amount to about \$40,000,000 per annum.

In this financial transaction, the farmers and tax payers of the land of the Pharoahs have all been captured and manacled in a day, as it were, and reduced to an abject bondage worse than chattel slavery, embracing no single element of mercy. Every man, woman and child of the present and future generations; every acre of soil, and every hooped animal and domestic fowl have been involved in the capture, and are to be sacrificed to the greed of unmerciful masters. From day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, beneath the burning tropical sun, under the spur and the lash of the tax gatherers, the fellah and 748 his wife and little ones toil from daylight to dark; they live in mud huts, dress in the merest rags, and subsist on refuse unfit for chattel slaves. The earnings of the slaves and the products of the land go beyond the sea to the coffers of the masters, who, living in London and Paris, are making new investments among the thoughtless nations of the earth; not in flesh and blood—that would be piracy and slavery—but in undying productive bonds, wherever princes, monarchs, congresses or legislatures can be cajoled, bulldozed or tampered with.

Egypt is reduced to bondage. No single master owns any single slave. There is no investment direct in flesh and blood. No master will suffer loss by the death of a slave. The investment is in bonds drawing interest by day, by night and on Sundays; bonds which do not die. The labor and lands of Egypt are pawned for the bonds, while its pauperized inhabitants toil and sweat, suffer and die. Soon the tax gatherers fail to raise the \$40,000,000 per annum. There is an annual deficit in the payment of interest. This is rank repudiation! Shylock must have his pound of flesh! British tax collectors take the place of the natives. Whips and bastinadoes are used to urge the payment of taxes. We are told:

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The fellaheen were bastinadoed as they never had been before, and the taxes were collected in advance. Mr. Romaine proposed to reduce the land tax so that the people might live; Major Baring on behalf of the bond holders refused to allow it.— *Appleton's Annual*, 1882, p. 235.

Finally poor, untaught, starving and bleeding humanity can bear no more. The foreign tax gatherers are attacked by their victims, and some of them are killed. Great Britain can brook no such insult. Thundering ironclads and British soldiers are sent to avenge the insolence, and to “enforce the claims of British subjects.” Alexandria is bombarded. Its streets are drenched with innocent blood. Human life is destroyed as no dynamiter, communist or nihilist would have the heart to do. Historic buildings, valuable libraries and the homes of the people melt in the flames, while hecatombs of human lives are sacrificed to this new slavery, containing among its ingredients not a single element of mercy. *This is a picture of bond slavery in Egypt!*

The Egyptians have long ago paid the full face of the bonds in interest. They have paid in the form of interest more than twice the amount of the money borrowed, but the bonds still live without diminution; they still cry, “Give! give!” And men are blown to atoms with gunpowder and shot down like dogs to enforce the continually increasing demands of the bond holders. No education, no rest, no comfort, no certainty of life, for the Egyptian tax payers, with the sharp teeth of British usury perpetually gnawing at their vitals. A similar slavery has been 749 instituted and is now enforced by British arms and diplomacy with severest rigor among the millions of India. Yet we are told by a leading magazine, already quoted, that for “fifty years there have been no slaves permitted under the flag of England!”

There are many forms, modifications and processes of bond slavery. I am now considering that variety which comes through a great national debt which may be fraudulently created and increased from time to time. During the late war the bonds of the United States were sold for half price currency. In 1869 these cheap currency bonds were made payable in coin, thus vastly adding to their value and to the burdens of the tax payers. In 1873 silver was dropped from the coinage, making

all coin bonds and all coin debts of all sorts payable in gold coin only; thus practically making them much more burdensome by cutting off half the means of payment.

In 1863 there was established in this country a national banking system, based on United States bonds, under which \$350,000,000, in the form of bank notes, was handed out of the treasury to a preferred class of capitalists, *without value received*. They were authorized to loan these notes to the people at high rates of interest. By these fraudulent and usurious methods billions of dollars have been drawn from the people in the form of interest alone. Billions of dollars have been, also, paid on the principal; yet now the remaining principal, through currency contraction and falling prices, is of greater purchasing value than was the currency originally borrowed.

The burdens borne by the American people would have destroyed half a dozen Egypts. It has not quite ruined us, on account of the extent and exuberance of our soil and the wonderful industry, intelligence and energy of our people. It has, however, on the one hand, reduced many thousands of honest laborers to pauperism; and, on the other hand, it has created a large and increasing class of dangerous millionaires whose intrigues are a daily menace to our free institutions. Many thousands of our people have fallen into rags and hunger until they can no longer enter the free schools, but exist and suffer as chronic enemies of society, ready to break out into open violence for bread whenever our millionaires choose to inaugurate a general panic, forcing industrial lockouts and famine.

The great fund-holding millionaires have their hands on the throats of the people through various forms of national, state, municipal, telegraph and railroad debts, many millions of which are water, costing the holders only the printing and signing of the papers. The interest and dividends on these bonds and stocks are met by high national and municipal taxation, and by high telegraph and transportation rates, forming a constantly flowing river of hard-earned cash from the fingers of labor and business into the coffers of the millionaires, who are thus our new slave masters. They are the masters of the tax payers, masters of Congress, masters of the legislatures, masters of the courts, masters of finance, masters of transportation and masters of the public means of communication and intelligence. In the pride of their power they snap their fingers in the faces of the people and say, "The public be damned!" and "What are you going to do about it?"

The chattel system has been abolished in the United States; but "Have we abolished slavery?" Ask the factory girls, the sewing women, the coal miners, the iron workers, the farmers and all the men and women of toil who form the great public which the Vanderbilts would damn to perpetual servitude! The old slavery rested on three millions of blacks, whom it pauperized, but fed and clothed. The masters never became millionaires. They were brutal and overbearing, but they had not the means to purchase great lines of railroads and telegraphs, and through them to levy tribute on

whole states. The new slavery rests on sixty millions of people. It makes paupers which society must feed; and it has created thousands of millionaire slave masters, with regular incomes of millions per annum, from the labor of the people.

Slavery is always the result where the master classes have monopolized the necessities of society and the means of life, so that the laboring or slave classes can have access to them only on the master's terms. In every system of slavery the slaves must labor to the utmost limit of human endurance for the merest pittance of food, clothing and shelter that will sustain life. The masters are the honored class, with power and disposition to inflict indignity, outrage and wrong upon the persons of the slaves, restrained only by their own ideas of mercy and moneyed interests. In chattel slavery the master owns his slaves as he does his horses, and is interested in their health and comfort. Such property must not suffer material detriment. The master will see to its physical preservation and animal prosperity, precisely as he will take care of his animals of value. The slaves are his property!

Chattel slavery, cruel and wicked as it necessarily, must be, still possesses, as we see, elements of mercy. There are other forms of slavery that are merciless! Yet men have analyzed the subject so little, that some of the most wicked and oppressive systems are utterly ignored. Even the enlightened British people, while actually moving the heavens and the earth, so to speak, in order to abolish chattel slavery and the African slave trade, have actually nurtured and still nurture in their own 751 islands the joint systems of wage and tenant slavery, which have paved the bed of the Atlantic Ocean from Cork, Liverpool and Belfast to New York with the skeletons of human slaves escaping from their chains. And America—our boasted free and liberty-loving America—whose people have poured out blood and treasure like water for the abolition of chattel slavery, is, as fast as time can move, suffering and aiding monopolies to grasp the means of life, through which to establish and compel the merciless slave systems of the old world.

During the late war, two gentlemen were discussing the great question of the day. It was before President Lincoln's proclamation of freedom had been issued. The progress of the war and the relative strength of the North and the South were the subjects of conversation.

Said one: "The black man holds the balance in his hands. His sympathies and friendships will turn the scale."

"Well," said the other, "his sympathies and friendships are on the side of the North, are they not? Surely the slaves cannot join their tyrants against their friends!"

"But," said the former, "suppose the Southerners should turn abolitionists?"

"They cannot do that," said the latter, "as that would be yielding the entire question at issue!"

"Apparently it would," said number one; "in reality it would not. Let me outline a plan that an enlightened Southern policy may adopt. Suppose the Confederate government should say to the slave holders: 'Sell us your slaves! Set your prices high, but sell us your slaves! We have no money, but we will pay you in bonds—perpetual bonds—with liberal interest payable semi-annually *forever!*' Seeing that slavery may be destroyed by the war, the enlightened slave holders should accept the offer. Then, when the slaves become the property of the Southern government, the proclamation should go forth to the slaves, 'Fight and you are free!' This course would change the sympathies of the slaves from the North to the South. The Southerners, noble fellows, would then have the credit of freeing their slaves, and the war would henceforth be a joint struggle of whites and blacks for national existence; while the North, shorn of her prestige and reputation on the slavery question, would have the bad reputation of fighting for empire. There would then be no moral or other reasons why England and France should remain neutral. The American blockade would be destroyed and the North would be beaten."

"But," asked number two, "what will become of slavery?"

"Oh," responded his companion, "slavery will be all right. It will be changed, of course, but it will be on a broader and 752 better basis than before. Nominally the slaves will be free; practically they will not. Formerly the masters owned the slaves and the lands. Latterly they will hold the bonds and the lands. The ex-slaves and poor whites will have access to the lands only on the master's terms. The *interest* on the bonds (paid by labor) will hire the labor of the new order of slaves *forever!* The former system compelled the master to care for the life and health of the slaves. The latter system compels the slave to work on the master's terms and care for himself. His death is no loss to the master. The master class is the ruling class—the law-making class. The new plan will be a much safer and better system, by which the master can enjoy the earnings of the man, than the former one. It is merely a change from the chattel system to the merciless European plan."

But the South did not adopt the plan outlined above. The rebels were beaten because the negroes joined the North. And the bonds that were lavishly issued at the instigation of the Wall Street and European money loaners, fell upon the laboring people of both the North and the South. Instead of Southern slave holders remaining the masters, our masters live in New York and London.

A much-quoted and much-denied but truly prophetic circular once predicted the conspiracy of the British slave holders as follows:—

Slavery is likely to be abolished by the war power, and chattel slavery is to be destroyed. This, I and my European friends are in favor of, for slavery is but the owning of labor, and carries with it the responsibility to care for the laborer; while the European plan, led in by England, is: *Capital control of labor, by controlling wages!* This can be done by controlling the money.

The great debt, that capitalists will see to it is made out of this war, must be used as the means to control the volume of money. To accomplish this the bonds must be used as the banking basis. We are now waiting to get the secretary of the treasury to make this recommendation to Congress. It will not do to let the greenback, as it is called, circulate as money any length of time, for we cannot control them. But we *can control the bonds*, and through them the bank issue.—Hazard Circular, 1862.

About the same time an eminent English writer is said to have stated the impending conspiracy in the form of an opinion as follows:—

There is likely to be an effort made by the capital class to fasten upon the world a rule through their wealth, and by means of reduced wages, place the masses upon a footing more degrading and dependent than has ever been known in history. The spirit of money worshippers seems to be rapidly developing in that direction.—Lubbock.

The New York *World*, an advocate of the new system of merciless slavery, is said to have delivered itself some years later as follows:—

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The American laborer must make up his mind henceforth not to be so much better off than the European laborer. Men must be content to work for less wages. In this way the working man will be nearer that station in life to which it has pleased God to call him.

The old chattel system was described by a proslavery journal in the halcyon days of chattel slavery as follows,—

The slave is fed and cared for by the master, and the products of his labor belong to the owner, and this was the place they were designed to fill.

How much alike slavery is in all its forms!—always casting its eyes toward heaven for the sanctity of its processes, and always breathing the same sentiment, “Cursed be Canaan,” toward the men whom it dooms to toil, poverty and degradation.

In order to complete the circuit and to do justice all around, I will give one more example of bond slavery, showing that the laboring people of England are also the slaves of the great English fund holders. Senator John P. Jones, a native of England, in his late speech in the United States Senate, described the means and processes of establishing the English slave system as follows:—

At the demand of the creditor classes the gold standard was adopted in England after the Napoleonic wars, in order that the war debt, a large portion of which was in paper, might be paid in gold. In his “Financial History of England,” Mr. Doubleday states his belief that for a portion of the war period the pound note with which the public securities of Great Britain were bought was not worth in specie over seven or eight shillings in the pound—about thirty-three to thirty-eight per cent.

The debt being afterward by law made payable, pound for pound, in gold, it is obvious that the bond holders of Great Britain then mulcted the people of that country, as, at a later period, the public creditors of the United States mulcted the people of this country. The English people supposed that they had long since paid the expenses of the struggle with Napoleon, but by the annual increase in the value of the pound sterling, that struggle is costing them more as the years go by. Although the war is over so far as concerns the destruction of men in uniform and on the battle field, yet their destruction continues *without* uniform, and *without* the formalities of battle lines. Although three fourths of a century have elapsed since that war terminated, the conflict still rages.

The bonds that were issued to pay the expenses of those wars are increasing in value at the same rate at which gold increases, which, for the past twenty years, is at the rate of two and a half per cent per annum. Napoleon has been dead for two generations. In his will, by formal words and solemn injunction, he bequeathed to France the duty of avenging upon England the untimely death to which it had consigned him. He might have saved himself the trouble. He has found avengers whom he little suspected, among the Englishmen themselves.

The public creditors, by the increasing exactions which, from year to year, they are making through the operation of the gold standard in the payments of interest on the war debt, have already by means of idleness and starvation brought to ruin, desolation and death, millions of such brave men as defeated Napoleon. The masses of the people of Great Britain, though able to cope with an open foe on a field in which they recognized the enemy, have not been on their guard against the insidious attacks of the crafty adversary who presented himself in the guise of a compatriot, who, under the authority of law, by a subtle manipulation of money, has continued the slaughter.

What American can have patience with the laudations he hears of the riches of Great Britain, when he knows that parents are compelled to force their children of tender years to hard and dreary labor

in order that the family taken all together may eke out a bare existence? Great numbers of little boys and girls, the future men and women of Great Britain, are wearing out their young lives in order that the nation may be called rich, and may be held up to the admiring gaze of the people of the United States.

Referring to the conditions of child labor in England, Senator Jones quotes Francis A. Walker as follows:—

We know that mill owners are harassed with applications from their hands to take children into employment on almost any terms, and that the consciences of the employers have required to be enforced by the sternest prohibitions and penalties of the law to save children ten, seven, or four years old from the horrors of “sweating dens” and crowded factories, since the more miserable the parents' condition, the greater becomes the pressure upon them to crowd their children somehow, somewhere, into service; the scantier the remuneration of their present employment, the less becomes their ability to obtain favor from outside for the better disposition of their offspring. Once in the mill, we know how little chance there is of the children afterwards taking up for themselves another way of life.

We know, too, that in the agricultural districts of England, gangs of children of all ages from sixteen down to ten, or even five years, have been formed and driven from farm to farm, and from parish to parish, to work all day under strange overseers, and to sleep in barns at night all huddled together without distinction of sex.—“The Wages Question,” p. 201.

So late as 1870, children were employed in the brick yards of England, under strange task masters, at three and one-half years of age. Account is given us, sickening in its details, of a boy weighing fifty-two pounds carrying on his head a load of clay weighing forty-three pounds, seven miles a day, and walking another seven to the place where his burden was to be assumed.— *Ibid.*, p. 202.

“John Ruskin,” says Senator Jones, “well understood the condition of his countrymen with regard to the distribution of wealth, when he said,—

Though England is deafened with spinning-wheels, her people have not clothes; though she is black from the digging of coal, they die of cold; and though she has sold her soul for gain, they die of hunger.

Senator Jones continues:—

And the great heart of Mrs. Browning, moved by the sight of hundreds of thousands of little hands prematurely set to labor to aid in piling up the riches which enable the American admirers of the gold standard to point to Great Britain as a rich nation—what does it say? Hear the pathetic appeal of a woman to the stony hearts of the classes for whose benefit those riches are accumulated:—

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"Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers, Ere the sorrow comes with years? They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, And *that* cannot stop their tears. The young lambs are bleating in the meadows; The young birds are chirping in the nest; The young fawns are playing with the shadows; The young flowers are blowing towards the West,— But the young, young children, O my brothers, They are weeping bitterly; They are weeping in the play time of the others, In the country that is free."

Without noticing other forms of this hydra-headed monster, which has been justly called "the sum of all villainies," I now close as I began, by asking as I was asked, "Have we abolished slavery?"